



Housing Flex Fund Policies & Procedures

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Lex End Homelessness Housing Flex Fund Policies and Procedures

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1. Introduction

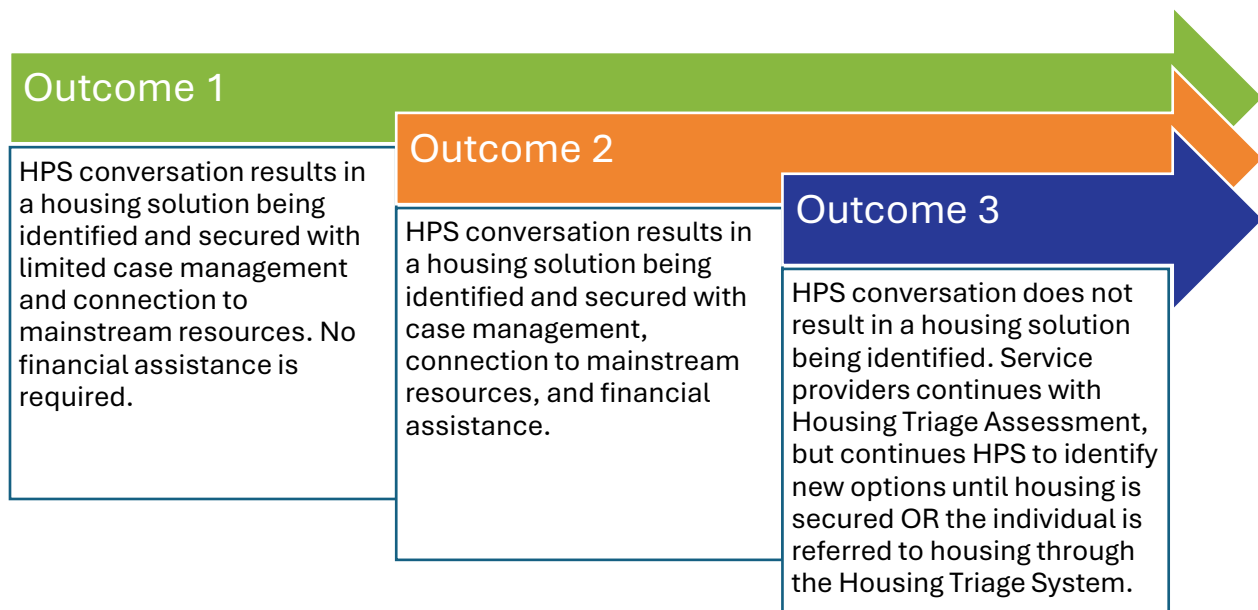
1.1 Housing Flex Fund Overview

The Lex End Homelessness Housing Flex Fund, managed by the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI), was created to provide a flexible source of funding to assist eligible participants and their households in obtaining and maintaining long-term, stable housing of their choice. The funds come from sources, such as local dollars and private donations, that allow for maximum flexibility tailored to the individualized needs of the household experiencing housing crisis.

1.2 Use of the Housing Flex Fund

The LEH Housing Flex Fund is one of the CoC's available tools to be used in Housing Problem Solving (HPS) conversations. The CoC promotes housing problem solving as a best practice and adopted system-wide intervention. This approach assists individuals in identifying their own strengths and opportunities to resolve their housing crisis without entering literal homelessness or, if they do, quickly exiting to a stable housing situation.

Many housing situations can be resolved without the use of financial assistance. Participating organizations should assist households in exploring all alternatives before requesting financial assistance. Provider organizations should engage participants in Housing Problem Solving conversations at presentation, assisting participants in both solving their immediate housing crisis and planning for long-term housing stability. This can include development of a housing plan and completion of a Housing Triage Assessment as appropriate.



2. Agency Participation and Roles & Responsibilities

2.1 LFUCG Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention

The Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention (OHPI) oversees the Lex End Homelessness Housing Flex Fund. In this role, OHPI staff:

- Identify and secure funding
- Contract with eligible provider agencies to administer the fund
- Determine appropriate funding sources for all eligible requests
- Update the LEH Housing Flex Fund policies and procedures as needed
- Ensure compliance to policies and procedures and consult Access Point Agencies as needed
- Monitor outcomes toward continuous improvement of the Housing Flex Fund

2.2 Housing Flex Fund Access Point Agencies

Access Point Agencies assist in making funds available to the community, accepting applications for assistance and processing payment. To be eligible to request Housing Flex Fund assistance on behalf of a participant, an agency must agree to:

- Complete all required Housing Flex Fund trainings and administer funds in compliance with the LEH Housing Flex Fund policies and procedures
- Document all transactions in the Kentucky Homeless Management Information System (KYHMIS)
- Conduct follow-up with participant households for up to six months after assistance is provided

In addition to program-specific responsibilities, organizations serving as an Access Point Agency are required to:

- Maintain active membership in the Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Participate in the Kentucky Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Participate in the CoC's Housing Triage System (Coordinated Entry)

Agencies desiring to become an Access Point Agency should contact Jeff Herron at jherron@lexingtonky.gov.

3. Eligible Participants

To receive funds, participants must have resided in Fayette County for at least one year and meet one of the following criteria:

3.1 Experiencing Homelessness

Individuals meeting Categories 1 or 4 of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness may request assistance:

- An individual or family staying in shelter, transitional housing, a place not meant for human habitation, or in an institution for less than 90 days if the individual/family was homeless immediately prior.
- An individual or family who is fleeing/attempting to flee domestic violence, has no other residence, and lacks the resources and support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

3.2 At-Risk of Experiencing Homelessness

Individuals at imminent risk of homelessness under Category 2 of the HUD definition of homelessness may request assistance:

- An individual or family who will lose their primary nighttime residence within 14 days, have not identified a subsequent residence, and lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

3.3 Recently Exited Homelessness

Individuals having recently exited homelessness may request assistance to prevent a return to homelessness:

- An individual or family who exited to a permanent housing destination within the last 365 days after having previously met the HUD definition of experiencing literal homelessness.

4. Allowable Expenses and Assistance Limits

4.1 Allowable Expenses

The Housing Flex Fund can be used to meet a variety of needs that are directly related to a participant's ability to obtain/maintain permanent, stable housing. Funds are intended to be used to address needs that cannot be met through other available sources and that are essential for preventing or ending the participants' homelessness. General expense categories are listed below, but may change over time. Consult the Lex End Homelessness Housing Flex Fund website to understand what expenses are allowable under currently available funding: <http://www.lexendhomelessness.com/resources-for-partners>

4.1.1 Move-In Assistance

- Reasonable rental application fees
- Security deposit
- Pet deposit
- Utility costs including startup costs or past due payment, if these unpaid costs impact a participant's ability to secure utilities in a new location
- Renter's insurance, if required to secure housing
- Essential home furnishings
- One-time moving costs, such as cost of a moving service or storage fees for a limited period
- Other housing expenses required for move-in as approved by the OHPI

4.1.2 Prevention Assistance

- Up to 2 months rental arrears with documentation of the past due rent **and** an agreement from the landlord they will permit the tenant to stay if arrears are paid
 - Arrears may also be paid to a previous landlord/property if payment of the debt is required to secure subsequent housing
- Up to 2 months utility arrears with documentation of the past due bill
- Up to 1 month of contract rent to be paid to the landlord to address damages where the landlord can document costs incurred and signs an agreement permitting the tenant to stay

4.1.3 Rental Assistance

Rental assistance may be requested to address a short-term need for rental support for situations such as sudden loss of income or medical emergencies. The request must include a confirmed plan for the participant to maintain rent after the assistance.

- Up to 2 month's forward rent

4.1.4 Relocation Assistance

Relocation assistance may be requested for a confirmed housing opportunity—such as a lease in another community or housing with a friend or family member who has committed to housing the participant for an indefinite period. The service provider must confirm the housing opportunity and note confirmation in the request for assistance and in HMIS. Reasonable transportation expenses include:

- Bus tickets
- Airfare
- Gas (using federal reimbursement rates)

Travel expenses should reflect the least expensive option based on the participant's need. Assistance for relocation expenses for participants driving themselves are typically made via gift/gas card.

Relocation assistance is limited to one-time use.

4.1.5 Other

Requests for assistance can also be requested in other areas where there is a direct connection to a participant's housing. This includes:

- Costs associated with obtaining critical documents (driver's license, state identification, birth certificate, academic transcripts)
- Bus passes (up to 3 months for specific needs related to housing goals)
- Items needed for specific employment or job training (uniforms, footwear, professional attire, tools, protective equipment)
- One-time assistance with essential home furnishings (non-luxury items considered necessary for habitability of a housing unit)

4.2 Rental Payment Guidelines

Assistance provided toward rent and related costs are expected to allow participants to obtain or sustain their housing. Service providers are required to plan for long-term housing stability with participants, particularly where rents are high for the area or rent is close to or appears to exceed the participant household's available income.

Requests for rental assistance for rents exceeding 150% of area Fair Market Rent (FMR) values must include in the request a justification for the rent amount, both in terms of its reasonableness for the unit and for the participant's ability to sustain the housing. Providers can access area Fair Market Rent values [here](#).

4.3 Annual Assistance Limits

Households are limited to following assistance limits in an annual period:

- Single adult households = up to \$2,000
- Households with minor children = up to \$3,000

If a participant household does not expend all assistance for which they are eligible, the household can submit for additional assistance within a one-year period until the household funding limit is reached. Households limits reset annually from the first date of assistance.

5. Application Process

5.1 Accessing and Submitting Applications

All applications must be prepared with the participant by an approved Access Point Agency or partner organization. Participants may not request funds on their own behalf.

The application and any related forms can be found on the Lex End Homelessness website at <http://www.lexendhomelessness.com>.

Access Point Agencies are responsible for developing a process for receipt of applications and required documentation. Guidelines for submission should be clearly communicated to applicant households.

5.2 Application Details

To be considered complete, applications must include the following:

- Date of Request
- Participant Household Information including
 - Name of household members
 - Date of Birth for Head of Household
 - Participant HMIS Client ID Number
 - Amount of Monthly Household Income
- Access Point Agency Information including:
 - Name of Organization
 - Name of Requestor
 - Name of Program (If Applicable)
- Requester Phone Number
- Requester E-mail Address
- Relationship of Requester to Participant (Case Manager, Housing Navigator, Etc.)
- Case Manager Name (If Different from Requester)
- Payment Request Information including:
 - Amount of Request
 - Area of Assistance Requested
 - From and To Service Dates
 - Explanation of Special Needs or Circumstances (ex: expedited payment)
 - Detailed Explanation of Reason for Request/Participant Need
 - Explanation of How the Need Cannot be Met by Other Community Resources
- Payment Information including:
 - Name of Vendor to be Paid
 - Contact Information for Authorized Representative
 - Mailing Address of Vendor or Name of Case Manager Picking Up Payment

Incomplete applications will not be accepted. Direct payment is made only to eligible third parties on the participant's behalf and only upon submission and approval of all required documentation.

5.3 Required Documentation

All payment requests must include the following documentation, uploaded as an attachment to the application:

- Participant Authorizations
 - Housing Flex Fund Information Form, Signed by the Participant and Agreeing to Receive Follow-Up Calls from the Access Point Agency Facilitating the Request
 - HMIS Release of Information
- W-9 Form Completed by the Landlord or Vendor
- For Rental Assistance Requests
 - Valid Rental Lease Agreement
 - Documentation of How Participant Will Maintain Rent Costs
 - If Rental Arrears, Copy of a 7-Day Notice or Eviction Notice and a Rent Ledger
- For Utility Assistance Requests
 - Complete Copy of the Utility Bill Including Account Information
 - Copy of the Participant's Lease
 - If Utility Arrears, Copy of a Utility Disconnect Notice/Documentation Utility Bill is 30 Days or More Past Due
- For Household Furnishings and Other Purchases
 - All Related Receipts/Invoices
 - Explanation of How the Purchase Directly Supports Obtaining/Maintaining Housing

5.4 Application Review Process

All assistance applications will be reviewed by the Access Point Agency in a timely manner (approximately 1-3 business days).

The Access Point Agency is responsible for:

- Ensuring completeness of application and required documentation
- Confirming eligibility of assistance requested per Housing Flex Fund policies
- Confirming eligibility of participant household, including HMIS review of any previously provided assistance
- Verifying the LEH Housing Flex Fund as the assistance source of last resort

If an assistance request is denied, the Access Point Agency will notify the applicant and provide a reason for denial. If the reason for denial is related to missing or incomplete documentation, the applicant may be given up to 10 business days to satisfy the remaining requirements. If requirements are not satisfied within 10 business days, the request must be resubmitted and the Access Point Agency cannot guarantee assistance.

The LEH Housing Flex Fund does not have an appeal process.

All assistance requests are contingent upon the availability of funding. Even if all eligibility criteria and related requirements are met, requests may not be approved.

5.5 Payment Disbursement

Access Point Agencies must demonstrate the financial and management capacity and experience to administer the LEH Housing Flex Fund as detailed in the policies and procedures.

Once the application is approved, payment will be disbursed by the Access Point Agency within 3 business days. The Access Point Agency should make reasonable efforts to expedite payment on time-sensitive assistance requests.

Direct payment is to be made only to eligible third parties on the participant's behalf and only upon submission and approval of all required documentation.

5.6 HMIS Requirements

All Access Point Agencies are required to maintain participant household and assistance records in the Kentucky Homeless Management Information System (KYHMIS). Access Point Agencies are required to comply with CoC's HMIS Data Quality Plan, meeting all standards for data accuracy, completeness, and timeliness. To avoid duplication of benefits, all records must be entered KYHMIS within 3 days.

Access Point Agencies are responsible for obtaining a KYHMIS Release of Information for all participant households. If a household refuses to have their information shared in HMIS, the Access Point Agency is responsible for communicating with the local HMIS Lead to adjust visibility settings accordingly.

Access Point Agencies are required to:

- Create/update Client Profiles in KYHMIS for the Head of Household and each household member
- Complete an Entry/Exit to the LEH Housing Flex Fund project containing basic household and assistance request information
- Complete Service Transactions reflecting any assistance approved and disbursed from the LEH Fund
- Complete Interim Updates to reflect required follow-up contacts at 30 days, 3 months, and 6 months after assistance is rendered
- Facilitate participant household access to the CoC's Housing Triage System (aka Coordinated Entry System) as needed and appropriate

5.7 Reimbursement to Access Point Agencies

Access Point Agencies are required to submit monthly invoices to the Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention for reimbursement of actual expenditures. Monthly invoices will be processed in accordance with LFUCG policies.

The Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention reserves the right to deny payment for any expenditures not in compliance with established LEH Housing Flex Fund policies. It is the responsibility of the Access Point Agency to consult the Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention on any questions or clarifications of policies in advance for disbursing payment on behalf of the participant household.

6. Follow-Up and Evaluation

In its mission to ensure everyone in Lexington has access to safe and stable housing, the Lex End Homelessness CoC believes:

- 1) That housing is the solution to ending and preventing homelessness. All services, supports, and funding are oriented towards achieving this solution.
- 2) In effectiveness. We evaluate our strategies and programming in order to improve and stay current on best practices to ensure they are fully implemented.
- 3) In data. We collect, analyze, and use data to understand opportunities for improvement, to monitor compliance, and to outwardly message the impact of our work.

6.1 Follow-Up Contact with Participant Households

Approved Access Point Agencies facilitating participant household requests for assistance agree to conduct follow-up contact to monitor continued housing stability. Follow-up contacts are to occur at the following milestone after assistance is rendered: 30 days, 3 months, and 6 months.

Access Point Agencies must document follow-up contacts within HMIS by completing an Interim Update including responses to all required fields.

6.2 Annual Report of Funding and Outcomes

The Lex End Homelessness Housing Flex Fund will present annually to the Program Performance and Evaluation Committee of the CoC Board. All programs receiving funding through Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government to address homelessness present annually to the committee.

The Program Performance and Evaluation Committee, composed of neutral parties with no direct affiliation with a service organization and/or its board, determines funding allocations on behalf of the CoC. Committee members utilize annual presentations to understand the effectiveness of funded programs as well as opportunities to improve both individual programs and system-wide strategies.

6.3 Ongoing Evaluation

At least annually, the Office of Homelessness Prevention and Intervention shall engage participating Access Point Agencies in a review of Housing Flex Fund policies and procedures. This review is intended to identify operational challenges, ensure consistency in service provision, and examine needed policy changes to reduce barriers and ensure equity.

Additionally, the Lex End Homelessness CoC values the expertise of persons with lived experience of homelessness. As such, all participant households will be provided the opportunity to complete a participant feedback survey.

Finally, the CoC will hold at least one listening session annually with persons with lived experience to solicit additional input regarding the needs of persons experiencing homelessness, ways to improve access to the Housing Flex Fund, and any additional resources that would improve program effectiveness and participant outcomes.

Changes to Housing Flex Fund Policies and Procedures should be presented to the Advocacy, Issues, and Programs Committee of the CoC Board for approval.